

Loving God with Heart and Soul

Intro

Focus

- “A center of activity, attraction, or attention”
- “A point of concentration”
- “Directed attention: emphasis”
- “A state or condition permitting clear perception or understanding”
- “The place of origin of an earthquake”

- We live in a time of abundance... and abundance needs to be managed.
- This is a culture that wants your eyes, your attention—your heart.
 - *YouTube*
 - *Hulu + Visine*
 - *Netflix Vista*
- In a world of a thousand options, life can be confusing.
 - “*Choice Anxiety*” & “*Decision Fatigue*”
- Our preference-based, visual culture affects how we view and treat people.
 - “*Focus*” by *Ariana Grande*
- Amidst so many opportunities, so many ideas, so much confusion.... what should we *focus* on?

“Our brains construct our worldview based on *what we pay attention to*... Who you are, what you think, feel, and do, what you love—is the sum of what you focus on.”

–**Cal Newport**, *Deep Work: Rules for Focused Success in a Distracted World*, 77

Mark 12:28-34

Life in Focus

Two Great Commandments

- When Jesus was asked this question, he provided two key priorities: 1) Love God, and 2) Love others. Beautifully simple, yet changing everything.
- *Shema* = “hear / listen / pay attention”
- “The Lord is One.” A radical claim in a pluralistic society. God is absolutely unique. He *dominates*. He is the One Thing.
- “You shall love the Lord your God with all your...”
 - Heart
 - Soul
 - Mind
 - Strength

“The living God expects to be sought and pursued with all the focus and attention and affection of our hearts.”

–**Tony Reinke**, *Competing Spectacles: Treasuring Christ in the Media Age*, 116

Stories of Revealing Priorities

Mark 11-12

Cleansing the Temple (11:15-19)

- The Temple was busy with activity—but with the wrong kind of activity.
- In turning the “House of Prayer” into a “den of robbers,” they had violated both of the great commandments.

Rendering to Caesar and to God (12:13-17)

- We live in this world... we go to school and to work... we interact with culture... we purchase things... we download apps... we're confronted with icons and images... we're members of society... we don't live on an island. We have to manage these things...
- But we don't give them our ultimate allegiance. Caesar's image is not on us. We give to God what he owns—everything.

Beware the "Religious" (12:38-40)

- You can be a person who goes to church, who avoids the really bad stuff, and not have affection for God!
- The scribes loved their clothing and status—and so they ignored the people who did not advance their cause. They loved themselves, not God or neighbor.

The Widow's Offering (12:41-44)

- The rich contributed "out of their surplus" = their leftovers.
- The widow who had almost nothing gave everything; she had a laser focus for what she loved.

Heart & Soul

In the Land of Abundance, Do Not Forget God

Deuteronomy 6:4-13

4 "Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one. 5 You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might. 6 And these words that I command you today shall be on your heart. 7 You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise. 8 You shall bind them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes. 9 You shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates. 10 "And when the Lord your God brings you into the land that he swore to your fathers, to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, to give you—with great and good cities that you did not build, 11 and houses full of all good things that you did not fill, and cisterns that you did not dig, and vineyards and olive trees that you did not plant—and when you eat and are full, 12 then take care lest you forget the Lord, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery. 13 It is the Lord your God you shall fear. Him you shall serve and by his name you shall swear.

"To 'be upon the heart' is to be in one's constant, conscious reflection."

–Eugene Merrill, *Deuteronomy*, 167

"People were made to worship God with all their heart—the full breadth of their internal experience and external conduct. ...God planned for this whole-hearted, dynamic love between himself and humans from the beginning, and he remains committed to his plan until the end."

–Jeremy Pierre, *The Dynamic Heart in Daily Life: Connecting Christ to Human Experience*, 23

God is After Your Affection

Deuteronomy 10:12-13

12 "And now, Israel, what does the Lord your God require of you, but to fear the Lord your God, to walk in all his ways, to love him, to serve the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul, 13 and to keep the commandments and statutes of the Lord, which I am commanding you today for your good?"

"Worship is the sign that in giving myself completely to someone or something, I want to be mastered by it." –Harold Best, *Music Through the Eyes of Faith*, 143

Fear

"If I feared less, I would love more—both God and people. But it is just as true that if I feared more, I would love more — both God and people. I've been praying for a while for God to align my affections and desires with his. ...For the sake of God's glory, for the sake of love, let us grow determined—let us become tenacious. Let us not settle in or make peace with misplaced fear governing any territory of our soul."

–Jon Bloom, "Lay Aside Your Misplaced Fear," *Desiring God Blog*

Walk

Serve

Love

“You do not merely decide to love him. Something changes inside of you, and as a result he becomes compellingly attractive. His glory—his beauty—compels your admiration and delight. He becomes your supreme treasure. You love him. The other thing I am emphasizing in the phrase ‘compelling beautiful’ is that love for God is not essentially thought or behavior but affection—not ideas or deeds but delight. God is our supreme pleasure. We prefer above all else to know him and see him and be with him and be like him.”

–**John Piper**, *Think: The Life of the Mind and the Love of God*, 8

“Not Far” from the Kingdom—When the King Isn’t in Focus

- This man treated this topic like it was an interesting debate. He missed who was before his eyes!

“We are addicted to novelty, and as with most addictions, it takes a toll on our bodies; we become mentally fatigued, ‘scrambled’... In this way, the modern mind is often not prepared to engage in dialogue about personally challenging ideas, particularly ones with deep implications. The fatigued mind would rather categorize a conversation about God as another superficial distraction, requiring little attention, than a serious conversation that ought to cost us... The space between the trivial and the crucial has shrunk.”

–**Alan Noble**, *Disruptive Witness: Speaking Truth in a Distracted Age*, 40, 44

- Being “near to the kingdom”—and even knowing the truth—is not enough. You need to enter! You need to love God with heart and soul!